

# The Politics-Bureaucracy Interface in Developing Countries

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# The Politics-Bureaucracy Interface in Developing Countries

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# **The Politics-Bureaucracy Interface in Developing Countries**

**Abstract:** The political-bureaucratic interface has been the subject of much academic interest. However, research has tended to focus exclusively on wealthy institutionalized democracies, with little attention given to the political-administrative relationship in developing countries. Evidence on reform processes in poorer nations increasingly points to the importance of interactions between politicians and bureaucrats. Drawing on this work, this paper provides a systematic overview of the political-bureaucratic relationship in developing countries. The paper makes two contributions. First, it introduces a typology of political-bureaucratic relations based on four models – *collaborative*, *collusive*, *intrusive*, and *integrated* – and discusses examples of each. Second, it analyses the main factors associated with different models of political-administrative relations, and considers how countries can move from one model of relations to another. The paper, therefore, provides a much needed entry point for scholars and development policymakers to better understanding the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats in developing countries.

## **Introduction**

The political-bureaucratic interface has been the subject of much academic interest and debate going back to Woodrow Wilson's work on the characteristics of political and administrative spheres in 1887 (Peters and Pierre, 2001; Svava, 2006; Peters, 2010; Overeem, 2012; Jacobsen, 2006). This debate centers on the respective roles of politicians and administrators in the policy process and the nature of the relationship between them. It has significant practical implications for policymaking, and as such,

continues to fuel academic interest (Demir and Nyhan, 2008; Georgiou, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Yet studies on the politics-bureaucracy relationship have tended to focus almost exclusively on wealthy institutionalized democracies (Gulrajani and Moloney, 2012). Despite the importance of the politics-bureaucracy relation for policymaking, there has been very little attention given to the relationship between politicians and top bureaucrats in developing countries, and how this relationship might shape the development process. This can be seen in Georgiou's (2014) recent 'atlas of the politics-administration dichotomy', which provides a review of the literature on the topic, and in doing so highlights the lack of attention given to the politics-bureaucracy relationship in developing countries.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of the politics-bureaucracy interface in the development process. A growing literature considers the process of reform in developing countries, pointing to the importance of political-bureaucratic interactions in reform processes (Tendler, 1997; Grindle, 2004; Melo *et al.*, 2012; Andrews, 2013; Levy, 2014). This research highlights the extent to which the politics-bureaucracy relationship in many developing countries differs from the Weberian ideal. Furthermore, it points to the substantial differences in the nature of the politics-administrative interface across developing nations. The civil service in many developing countries 'has power rivaling that of the political establishment' (Grindle and Thomas, 1991: 60-61), while in others, by contrast, governance is hindered by the absence of a coherent bureaucracy (Evans, 1992). In such cases, the Weberian model bears little resemblance to the realities of political-bureaucratic engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Bureaucrat' in this paper refers to non-elective government officials involved in government administration and is used interchangeably with 'administrator' and 'civil servant'.

However, despite these lessons, there has so far been little systematic analysis of the types of relationships between politicians and bureaucrats in developing countries.

We address this gap in the literature by providing a systematic overview of the politics-bureaucracy relationship in developing countries. The politics-bureaucracy interface is defined as the particular forms in which politicians and bureaucrats engage with one another and the factors that shape this engagement. If we consider the fact that politicians and bureaucrats have the authority and capability to initiate, design, adopt, implement and regulate policy in different areas, then we would be sympathetic towards the idea that a ‘politically informed’ approach to development requires an understanding of the nature of the politics-bureaucracy relationship in a country, how the relationship might change, and what factors are associated with this relationship.

### **TYPES OF POLITICAL-BUREAUCRATIC RELATIONS**

In this section we introduce four models of political-bureaucratic relations (see Table 1). These models are based on two dimensions along which the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats can be conceptualized: *separation* and *autonomy*, drawing on Svara (2006). *Separation* refers to the extent to which political and administrative spheres are formally distinct. In some contexts, the roles and responsibilities of politicians and bureaucrats are clearly demarcated, while in others, there is considerable overlap in the roles of each and a lack of clear assignment of responsibilities. Roles refer to the ‘functions that an official performs’, which includes setting the policy agenda, implementing policy, allocating resources, managing resources and so forth (Svara, 2006).

-- Insert Table 1 about here --

Where there is high role separation (*intrusive* and *integrated* models), these different functions are clearly assigned to politicians and bureaucrats. A high level of separation between political and administrative spheres is associated with a rule-of-law-oriented politically neutral civil service, as per the Weberian ideal, and is often present in more democratic political systems. In this type of system, the administrative sphere acts as the implementing arm of the elected officials. In doing so, bureaucrats must act in accordance to political demands while ensuring neutrality in policy implementation. Where there is low role separation (*collusive* and *collaborative* models) both sets of officials perform these various functions, which dilutes responsibilities among politicians and bureaucrats. In these cases, while bureaucrats must still ensure that policies are provided on an equal basis to all citizens, their political neutrality is not presupposed.

*Autonomy* refers to the extent to which bureaucrats have the space or freedom to go about performing the functions they are assigned without political interference (Aucoin, 1990). In contexts where there is low bureaucratic autonomy (*intrusive* and *collusive* models), bureaucrats are subordinate to politicians in carrying out their roles. Political leaders generally have a number of policy objectives or mandates they seek to achieve. Where a bureaucracy has high autonomy, these mandates tend to be fewer in number and more general, providing the bureaucracy the necessary space to work out the details of how these policy objectives can be achieved (Fukuyama, 2013). Where there is low bureaucratic autonomy, we may see situations where mandates provided by political leaders establish detailed rules, with bureaucrats provided no independence or discretion on how to carry out the mandate.

Bureaucratic autonomy is a key component of high-quality governance (Huntington, 2006). As Fukuyama (2013: 359) notes, ‘a high degree of autonomy is what permits innovation, experimentation and risk taking in the bureaucracy’. This innovation and experimentation has been central to the development process. Bureaucratic autonomy was essential to the transformation of the East Asian ‘developmental states’, such as South Korea and Singapore. Furthermore, excessive bureaucratic subordination is typically a key reason for poor or predatory governance (Evans, 1992).

The difference between separation and autonomy is that the former refers to the *types* of functions politicians and bureaucrats perform, and the latter refers to *how* bureaucrats can perform the functions they have been assigned. Hence, while both integrated and collaborative models have a high degree of bureaucratic autonomy, they differ in terms of the types of functions politicians and bureaucrats perform. In the former, political leaders set the broad policy directives and civil servants provide policy options based on these directives and advise ministers on the feasibility, strengths, and weaknesses of the different policy options. Civil servants are also responsible for policy implementation. In the collaborative model, in contrast, senior bureaucrats are often responsible for the actual setting of policy directives.

It is important to point out that the typology presented is based on broad categorizations; the types of relations between politicians and administrators in reality is more blurred, often varying across levels of governance. As such, there are likely to be countries that do not precisely fit one of the four models presented. It is also important to note that the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is not fixed; these relationships change over time according to broader political and economic factors, or due to factors directly linked to a country’s civil service. We

discuss changes in political-bureaucratic relations following our discussion of the four basic models.

### *Collaborative Model*

The collaborative model is characterized by low role separation between political and bureaucratic elites, with high levels of bureaucratic autonomy. It is particularly associated with *developmental states* – governments that actively promote socioeconomic development through market-oriented policies – such as the East Asian Tigers (Amsden, 1989; Wade, 1990; Evans, 1992), Botswana (Leftwich, 1995; Taylor, 2005), and more recently China (Baek, 2005; Knight, 2014). The close relationship between political and bureaucratic elites, together with the autonomy given to a highly skilled and meritocratic bureaucracy, is seen as central to the use of industrial policy in the developmental states that led to economic transformation (Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990; Evans, 1992; Leftwich, 1995).

A key feature of the collaborative model is the unusually high degree of influence that bureaucrats have in the policy process. This has meant the successful use of industrial policy in these states is largely attributed to key economic ministries (Johnson, 1982).

There are several fundamental characteristics of the collaborative model:

- Core group or ‘cadre’ of developmental elites consisting of senior politicians and bureaucrats.
- Unusually high degree of bureaucratic influence in proposal and design of policies.
- An *esprit de corps* among the political and bureaucratic elites based on development objectives.



- Shared class and education backgrounds of political and bureaucratic elites.
- Coherent and meritocratic bureaucracies.
- Movement between bureaucratic and political positions.
- Bureaucracy subsumed within dominant political party.

The collaborative model of political-bureaucratic relations associated with developmental states is noted for the presence of ‘a small cadre of developmentally-determined senior politicians and bureaucrats, usually close to the executive head of government’, which establishes the principles of the regime (Leftwich, 1995: 405). The close working relationship between political and bureaucratic elites facilitates the unusually high degree of influence bureaucrats have in making policy in this system. Indeed, the bureaucracy in developmental states is often seen to have been in charge of the day-to-day running of the country. Politicians often act more like judges or referees, in that they tend to arbitrate and mediate in the policymaking process, rather than taking a more interventionist role (Charlton, 1991; Evans, 1992; Leftwich, 1995). It is, however, important to note that bureaucrats have this high degree of influence because the political leadership decides this should be the case (see Charlton, 1991). In other words, the level of autonomy bureaucrats have is generally determined by the political leadership; there are very few examples of systems in which administrators dominate politicians.<sup>2</sup>

The close relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is fostered by a set of shared values and objectives that enables politicians to delegate far more responsibility to bureaucrats. The notion of an *esprit de corps* among politicians and

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<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama (2013: 358) provides the examples of Imperial Germany before World War I and Japan before World War II as cases where bureaucrats had full autonomy and dominated politicians, particularly with regard to their military services. Indeed, one could argue that military coups across the developing world represent examples of administrators taking power from politicians. We do not consider this issue here – instead, we limit our focus to civilian bureaucracies.

bureaucrats based on achieving development objectives is a feature of virtually all accounts of developmental states (Wade, 1990; Charlton, 1991; Evans, 1992; Leftwich, 1995). Rothstein (2015) discusses this in the context of China's 'cadre administration', where bureaucrats have high levels of commitment to the 'policy doctrine' of the bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> In many developmental states, the similar class and/or higher education backgrounds of politicians and bureaucrats facilitated the development of an *esprit de corps* (Johnson, 1982; Evans, 1992).

In addition to these shared values, the bureaucracy is often subsumed within the dominant political party.<sup>4</sup> This means the bureaucracy in the collaborative model is not impartial or politically neutral, as per the Weberian ideal. Indeed, as Saxena describes in the case of Singapore following independence, the People's Action Party government, 'did not appreciate political neutrality; instead it expected the civil service to be aligned to its vision' (2011: 38). This politicized nature of the bureaucracy is further demonstrated by the frequent movement of senior bureaucrats into political office – a feature of most developmental states (Leftwich, 1995).

Bureaucracies in the collaborative model have the Weberian characteristics of being coherent and meritocratic, which contributes to the high level of bureaucratic autonomy. Bureaucracies in developmental states are widely noted for being able to attract the country's best graduates. On entering the public administration these officials tend to adhere to the bureaucracy's established objectives, rules, and norms,

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<sup>3</sup> Rothstein's (2015) discussion of China's 'cadre administration' focuses on the characteristics of China's public administration, rather than the relationship between politicians and administrators. He argues that instead of a commitment to a political ideology, such as Marxist-Leninism, China's cadre administration is now characterized by an adherence to specific policies in areas such as healthcare and education.

<sup>4</sup> Most developmental states have been autocratic, although governance in these states tends to be more party-based rather than a powerful individual leader (Leftwich, 1995). Even in more democratic developmental states, such as Botswana, one political party tends to dominate.

with their career progression based on performance against these standards (Wade, 1990; Evans, 1992).

### *Collusive Model*

A close relationship between political and bureaucratic elites based on low role separation is also a feature of patrimonial or predatory states. However, in these countries, political-bureaucratic relations are based on a collusive model, where bureaucratic autonomy is low, and sometimes virtually non-existent. This collusive relationship fosters patronage networks used to extract rents. This can be seen in predatory states, such as Zimbabwe (Dashwood, 2000). It is also associated with some more democratic countries, such as Mexico, where politics is dominated by a patronage system (Grindle, 2012). There are several characteristics of the collusive model:

- Control of the state apparatus is vested in a small group of politicians and bureaucrats connected through personalistic ties.
- Those in key political and administrative positions have access to the major means of acquiring personal wealth in the country.
- The government bureaucracy is used primarily for rent-seeking purposes.
- Employment in the bureaucracy is based on loyalty to politicians leading to large and inefficient bureaucracies.

Much of the research on patrimonial states has focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, where ‘overgrown’ bureaucracies incorporated into rent-seeking governments and the pervasive corruption that follow are widely seen as a central cause of the post-independence economic stagnation across the continent (Bates, 1994). This has

frequently led to a focus on reducing the size of bureaucracies in the countries. The problem, however, is more to do with the lack of bureaucratic autonomy, as Evans (1992: 151) notes in the case of Zaire under Mobutu's leadership, where it was 'not that the bureaucracy impedes development so much as the *absence* of a coherent bureaucratic apparatus.'

A principal feature of the collusive model is that employment in the bureaucracy is based on personal or political loyalty. All bureaucracies (in developed and developing countries) have some political appointments. However, in the collusive model this tends to be the norm. As Grindle (2012) argues, this difference can be seen in the nature of the contract between employer and employee. The patronage system in the collusive model means that this contract is based on a personal or political loyalty to an individual. In systems with an institutionalized civil service, this contract tends to be between an individual and an institution. It is also worth noting that because there are often political factions and conflicts within patronage systems – such systems are 'often quite messy' (Grindle, 2012: 20).

### *Intrusive Model*

The intrusive model has a much higher degree of separation between political and administrative spheres than the previous two models. This is linked to the presence of more rule-of-law-oriented politically neutral bureaucracies – often established during colonial rule, as in the case of India. While there is high role separation between politicians and bureaucrats, levels of bureaucratic autonomy are often low due to political interference in the day-to-day work of civil servants.

The intrusive model is often present in more democratic developing countries, such as India and Brazil. However, it is important to note that there is significant variation in the types of political systems in states characterized by the intrusive model; the intrusive model is not restricted to democratic systems. The relationship between political and bureaucratic elites also tends to be more heterogeneous – varying across countries and within countries (according to different ministries). There are several factors associated with the intrusive model:

- Bureaucratic power and procedures often strongly influenced by colonial systems.
- More rule-of-law-based politically neutral bureaucracy
- More frequent political change linked to competitive elections.
- Significant political interference in bureaucratic work, particularly in recruitment and career progression in the bureaucracy.
- Other actors in society influence policymaking.

The low bureaucratic autonomy in the intrusive model differs from the collaborative model. Countries with intrusive relations often have bureaucracies established during colonial rule. At independence, the civil service was often the most powerful institution because colonial powers generally developed the bureaucracy at the expense of other political institutions – particularly, political parties – in order to maintain law and order (Smith, 2009; Wallis, 1989; Riggs, 1963). As such, the lack of bureaucratic autonomy in these contexts is often the result of power struggles between political and bureaucratic elites. Politicians have generally been able to assert their control over the civil service. This control often occurs through political interference in civil service recruitment and promotions, as Ayee (2013) discusses in the case of

Ghana. Bureaucracies do, however, attempt to resist such political control. Many countries with intrusive political-bureaucratic relations have institutional checks in place to limit political interference in civil service recruitment and promotion, as we discuss in more detail below. This is an important difference between the intrusive and collusive model.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the research on bureaucracies in development focuses on the intrusive model. This research suggests that a key issue at the root of the tension between political leaders and the bureaucracy in these countries is that the development needs of these countries meant that political leaders sought political and economic transformation of the country. The colonially established civil services, however, were unresponsive to such demands because they were concerned more with following procedure and maintain the status quo in these societies (Dwivedi, 1999; Brett, 2009). As Hirschmann (1999: 291) notes, the bureaucratic elites in these countries turned out to be ‘rather conservative and process-oriented, and very defensive about the possibility of losing their economic security and social status in a fragile political situation.’<sup>6</sup> However, it is important to note that tensions between politicians and bureaucrats in these countries may also arise because political elites undermine civil service procedures for rent-seeking purposes.

Competitive elections are also an important feature of many countries with intrusive political-bureaucratic relations.<sup>7</sup> This tends to mean that politicians have much shorter

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<sup>5</sup> This is demonstrated in the difference between Brazil, which has an intrusive model, and Mexico, which has a more collusive model. As Grindle (2012: 148-9) explains, Brazil has a very high level of merit-based hiring in the bureaucracy; in contrast, Mexico has a relatively low level of meritocratic recruitment.

<sup>6</sup> Much of the *development administration* literature that emerged in the 1960s focused on transforming this colonial bureaucracy into a more development-centered public administration (Dwivedi, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Ayee’s (2013) description of the politicization of the public service in Ghana occurred following the country’s return to democracy, highlighting the link between democracy and intrusive political-bureaucratic relations.

tenures than career civil servants, which provides greater incentives for bureaucrats to obstruct political mandates as those issuing these mandates may only be in power until the next election. Often, a breakdown in political-bureaucratic relations is linked to political change. After a period of one-party domination, there may be a lack of trust between new political leaders and the bureaucracy because the bureaucracy is associated with the previous regime (Everest-Phillips, 2013). Furthermore, the more open nature of political systems in many of these countries means that additional actors, such as elite classes, unions, civil society, and donors, influence policymaking and political-bureaucratic interactions.

### *Integrated Model*

The integrated model of political-bureaucratic relations is characterized by clear role separation between politicians and bureaucrats, and high bureaucratic autonomy. This model is associated with advanced democracies, such as the UK and the USA, which have strong political institutions. There are several key characteristics:

- Clear separation of roles and hierarchy between politicians and bureaucrats.
- Primary responsibility of bureaucrats is to advise political leaders and implement decisions made by these leaders.
- Rule-of-law based politically neutral civil service.
- Meritocratic recruitment and promotion in the bureaucracy.

These characteristics are generally in line with the Weberian ideal, which tends to be the normative ideal in Western societies characterized by an integrated model, rather than necessarily being the reality of political-administrative relations (Hansen and Ejersbo, 2002). Bureaucracies in many advanced democracies are actually far more

politicized than the Weberian ideal, and the separation of political and administrative roles may at times be unclear (Svara, 2006).

As such, it is important to note that there are significant differences in political-bureaucratic relations among countries characterized by the integrated model. Indeed, Svara (2006) differentiates between countries within this group according to differences in role separation and bureaucratic autonomy. The key point, though, is that while there may be differences among countries within the integrated model, the within-group differences are substantially lower than differences with countries that have other political-administrative models. For example, while the USA may have a higher proportion of political appointments in the bureaucracy than the UK, in both countries the bureaucracy is broadly based on principles of merit and political neutrality. This differs considerably from countries in the collusive model where appointment based on political loyalty is institutionalized (Grindle, 2012).<sup>8</sup>

## TRANSFORMING POLITICAL-BUREAUCRATIC RELATIONS

In considering models of political-bureaucratic relations in developing countries, an important question that arises is how do states move from one model of political-bureaucratic relations to another? Governance reforms promoted by donors in recent decades have, to a significant degree, attempted to transform the relationship between politicians and civil servants. These efforts, however, have frequently ended in failure, demonstrating the need to better understand how change happens.

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that the introduction of *New Public Management* (NPM) based reforms in a number of advanced democracies has changed the relationship between politicians and administrators considerably. A detailed discussion of these changes is beyond the scope of this paper. However, broadly-speaking, these reforms have led to a more market contract-like relationship between ministers – the purchasers of goods and services – and ministries and other public or private entities – the suppliers of goods and services (Schick, 1998). It is also worth noting that some argue NPM is being replaced in some developed democracies by information technology centred governance (see Dunleavy *et al.*, 2005).



All states have at some point in time had public services based on patronage systems with collusive political-bureaucratic relations. A number of scholars, most notably Grindle (2012), have examined how countries have gone from having patronage systems to merit-based civil service systems considering historic and contemporary cases. In most cases change occurred as a result of political entrepreneurs working strategically with like-minded reformists to bring civil service reform. The way this change was introduced varied across different contexts. In some countries it was through top-down initiatives from political leaders, in others it was the result of elite settlements, or competition among political parties. Even after reforms were adopted, patronage often continued, and so ensuring reforms were implemented required further strategic political action in the post-reform period. Therefore, in most cases change occurred ‘slowly and gradually’ (Grindle, 2012: 9).

Most donor-promoted governance reforms have sought to move countries to the integrated model of political-bureaucratic relations, often bringing in aspects of general management theories, based on the *New Public Management* (NPM) approach. While the aim of bringing widespread private sector managerial practices into the public sector has influenced governments across the globe, its effects have often been questioned (Pollit, 2006; Dunleavy and Hood, 2009). One reason that such efforts have produced disappointing results is because they failed to consider the limitations of markets and the private sectors in these countries. Following independence, the absence of a strong domestic private sector in most countries meant the bureaucracy was the main instrument of economic development (Hirschmann, 1999). This also meant the bureaucracy became the major source of employment in many developing countries. Therefore, change in the nature of political-bureaucratic relations is linked to the relative strength of the private sector. As Schick (1998: 129)

points out, 'progress in the public sector requires parallel advances in the market sector.'

This is demonstrated in the case of developmental states with collaborative political-bureaucratic relations. The development success of these countries is linked to the success of the political leadership and key economic ministries in implementing policies that strengthened the private sector in these countries (Wade, 1990). Furthermore, in many developmental contexts, such as Japan and China, political leaders sought to incentivize bureaucrats to implement strategies to strengthen the private sector by allowing senior bureaucrats to retire early and join the private sector (Johnson, 1982; Li, 1998). The development of a strong private sector has also led to change in political-bureaucratic relations. Effectively, it has meant that the bureaucracy is no longer needed to be driver of economic development, and as such the process of development has meant that these states, particularly those in East Asia, have moved from collaborative relations towards the integrated model (Cheung, 2005).

It is important to note that there are limitations associated with the collaborative model. The close relationship between political and bureaucratic elites has meant that corruption has been a major issue (Evans, 1992; Kang, 2002). Furthermore, while there are examples of democratic developmental states, most have been autocratic, which has meant the public has had little voice in the policy process, and political opposition has often been suppressed (Leftwich, 1995). Perhaps the most important lesson is that change occurs slowly and gradually, and the trajectory of change varies significantly, depending on specific country contexts. Therefore, it is important to move away from trying to move countries to an integrated model using extensive

reforms implemented quickly, towards better understanding how gradual and incremental changes in the politics-bureaucracy interface can better enable politicians and bureaucrats to respond to the development requirements of a specific context. Building this understanding requires further research on specific parts of the politics-bureaucracy interface in developing countries.

In looking at how the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats in a country may change, it is worth considering the principal factors shaping the political-bureaucratic relationship in developing countries. These issues shed light on differences across political-bureaucratic models and what the sources of change or continuity in particular political-bureaucratic relationship may be. A wide range of context-specific factors will influence the nature of political-bureaucratic engagement in a given country; however, drawing on empirical analyses of governance and reform processes in poorer nations (e.g. Evans 1992; Tandler 1997; Hirschmann, 1999; Grindle, 2004; 2012; Melo *et al.*, 2012; Levy, 2014), we identify four issues that consistently influence political-bureaucratic relations. These are a) resources; b) recruitment and career progression; c) representativeness; and d) values, interests and motivations.

### *Resources*

Political-bureaucratic interactions are strongly influenced by the resources that each set of officials can draw on. By resources, we refer to the sources of power available to politicians and bureaucrats that enable each to influence decision-making. Hirschmann (1999: 289) argues development organizations often overlook the influence bureaucrats have on development programmes because they fail to consider the resources the bureaucracy has at its disposal, such as ‘legal authority and informal

administrative power based on relative expertise, permanency and influence over policy formulation and implementation.’ There are three main types of resource: *institutional*, *informational*, and *financial*.

A country’s political institutions allocate power and position to political and bureaucratic elites, providing the framework for interactions, determining the representation of interests in the decision-making process, and establishing the rules and norms by which political and bureaucratic spheres are governed. Political institutions establish a hierarchy between politicians and bureaucrats, with the former holding the overall decision-making authority. Political leaders can ignore the advice of bureaucrats, and often have the power to appoint and remove administrators, as Ayee (2013) explains in the Ghanaian context.

Bureaucrats can also draw on institutional resources. The constitutions of many developing countries offer bureaucrats protection from excessive political interference. This particularly relates to laws that protect bureaucrats against dismissal from ministers, which tend to lead to political-bureaucratic relations based on the integrated or intrusive model. Despite the original intentions of such laws, there is evidence to suggest that their effects to safeguard bureaucrats in case of dispute with politicians differs across countries (McCourt and Eldrige, 2003). Limited terms for political leaders also limit political overreach, and so bureaucrats tend to have much longer tenures than political leaders who are in office for much shorter time periods.

Beyond these broad effects, variations in countries’ political institutions produce significant differences in the nature of political-bureaucratic interactions. For example, relations are influenced by whether a country is democratic or not. In democracies politicians may be less willing to follow bureaucratic advice if there are

political costs that may jeopardize reelection. As we have discussed, in democracies, politicians also tend to have shorter tenures than bureaucrats, providing greater incentives for bureaucrats to obstruct political mandates on the basis that there may be a change in leadership after an election. Political-bureaucratic interactions can also vary according to parliamentary or presidential systems. As legislators in parliamentary systems have ultimate authority over the cabinet and bureaucracy, they may be more willing to provide bureaucrats with greater autonomy than in presidential systems, where legislators may be concerned with the possibility of the president using the bureaucracy in ways that go against legislators' interests (Eaton, 2000; see also Cowhey and McCubbins, 1995).<sup>9</sup> In addition to formal political institutions, informal institutions also shape political-bureaucratic relations.<sup>10</sup> For example, in Japan, the *Amakudari* – an unwritten rule that retiring state bureaucrats were awarded high-level positions in private corporations – helped foster collaborative ties between politicians and bureaucrats (Johnson, 1982; Helmke and Levitsky, 2004).

The second type of resource that is seen to shape the politics-bureaucracy relationship is informational resources, which broadly refers to knowledge and expertise about different aspects of the political and policymaking process. The information asymmetry between politicians and bureaucrats that arises from bureaucratic expertise has been the subject of considerable academic attention (see Moe, 2006). As Weber (1968) explained, expertise represents the principal source of power for bureaucracies, and can be at the root of conflict between politicians and bureaucrats – a conflict between hierarchy and expertise. This is especially so in developing

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<sup>9</sup> Although as Eaton (2000) points out, the autonomy of bureaucrats is not uniform across different parliamentary and presidential systems.

<sup>10</sup> Helmke and Levitsky (2004: 725) define informal institutions as 'rules of the game' that structure political life 'created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels.'

countries characterized by the intrusive model, where bureaucrats are ‘often said to monopolize the knowledge and expertise relevant to government’ (Smith, 2009: 135).

The policy expertise of bureaucrats is also an important factor in the collaborative model of political-bureaucratic relations. The high level of bureaucratic knowledge and expertise is the basis of the significant influence that bureaucrats have on the policy process. As the developmental states literature highlights, the key economic ministries in many of these countries attracted the best graduates (Johnson 1982; Wade 1990; Evans 1992). It is, however, important not to overlook the expertise that politicians may have. This includes knowledge of the broader political context and of specific policy issues, which will shape their interactions with bureaucrats. Chung (1989), for example, finds the influence of presidents and bureaucrats in South Korea’s decision-making process depended largely on the extent of presidents’ knowledge of a specific issue.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the precise nature of the relationship between bureaucratic expertise and political-bureaucratic interactions is somewhat unclear. Knowledge and expertise is a characteristic of the bureaucracy in all of the models except the collusive model. Furthermore, there is very little empirical analysis of how bureaucratic expertise influences the politics-bureaucracy relationship – particularly on how changes in levels of expertise impact interactions between politicians and administrators.<sup>12</sup> The third resource influencing political-bureaucratic relations is financial resources. This is control over material resources between politicians and bureaucrats. In general,

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<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that the extent to which expertise provides bureaucrats influence is likely to vary across different sectors.

<sup>12</sup> Studies have, however, argued that differences in levels of bureaucratic expertise within countries leads to different political-bureaucratic relations across different ministries within a country (e.g. Costello 1996).

political leaders' greater control over a country's resources ensures greater responsiveness by bureaucrats to their demands.

Ministries and agencies that have access to external funds are likely to have greater autonomy from political leaders than those entirely dependent on the central government for funding.<sup>13</sup> As such, aid provided to specific ministries may redress power imbalances in the politics-bureaucracy relationship. However, there are significant limitations to such external funding, particularly as there is danger of donor-funded agencies becoming more accountable to external donors than to citizens and elected officials (Hirschmann, 1999).

#### *Recruitment and Career Progression*

Meritocratic recruitment and career progression is a central feature of Weber's ideal type bureaucracy. It is a key factor distinguishing developmental states, which tend to have meritocratic bureaucracies, from patrimonial states, where bureaucratic recruitment and promotions are almost always based on personalized ties (Evans, 1992; Leftwich, 1995; Grindle, 2012). The absence of meritocratic recruitment in the bureaucracy is associated with producing public administrations that are inflated, inefficient, corrupt, and lacking in autonomy from political leaders. It is the absence of meritocratic recruitment in many developing countries that is the most prominent feature of a collusive model of political-administrative relations.

A principal means of ensuring meritocratic recruitment in the bureaucracy is through a civil service entrance examination. This entrance exam, together with the prestige associated with employment in the civil service, enabled developmental regimes to

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<sup>13</sup> Costello (1996) shows how access to external funding produced differences in levels of bureaucratic autonomy in Tanzania.

recruit the countries' best graduates (Evans, 1992). This is a key factor in the high levels of bureaucratic autonomy and influence in policymaking. In contrast, many states, particularly in Latin America, have tended not to have formal civil service entrance exams (Grindle, 2012; Parrado and Salvador, 2011). Instead most positions in the bureaucracy are 'assigned on the basis of political affiliation, social class, ethnic group, nepotism or family connections' (Meacham, 1999: 282). This, in turn, is linked to a lack of bureaucratic autonomy.

Having civil service exams, however, does not necessarily ensure that recruitment into the bureaucracy is meritocratic. As Evans and Rauch (2000: 53) note, 'exams and other credentials may not select for relevant skills but instead may function mainly as barriers to entry that shield incumbent officials from competition from qualified outsiders.' Furthermore, there may be some conflict between achieving more representative bureaucracy and seeking to achieve meritocracy through civil service exams (see below).

In addition to recruitment being meritocratic, it is also important that career progression in the bureaucracy is based on performance rather than political loyalty. This is a crucial area where political interference can restrict bureaucratic autonomy, and tends to be a central characteristic of intrusive political-bureaucratic relations (Ayee, 2013). In India, for example, civil servants are provided constitutional protection against unfair dismissal by ministers, and so the main way politicians assert their control over the bureaucracy is by assigning and transferring civil servants to posts of varying importance, often based on caste affinity (Iyer and Mani, 2012).

While the extent to which positions in the bureaucracy are filled by political appointment tends to be associated with political control over the bureaucracy,



political appointments are not necessarily made on the basis of political loyalty (Everest-Phillips, 2013). Recent analyses of successful reforms in developing countries show that political appointments can be important for reform success where there is bureaucratic resistance to change or where there is a lack of expertise on a specific policy area within the bureaucracy (Grindle, 2004; Melo *et al.*, 2012). In such cases, political appointments can help to produce more collaborative political-bureaucratic relations around a reform process.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that recent decades have seen the expansion of educational programs in public administration and public policy, which have been geared towards promoting more meritocratic bureaucracies (Hajnal, 2003). While these formative activities initially took place in Western countries, they have rapidly been adopted by many developing countries (Sabharwal and Berman, 2013). Despite this trend, little is known about how these programs have affected the performance of public servants (Newcomer, Allen and Baradei, 2010; Lewis, 1987).

### *Representation*

A key issue shaping and reflecting political-bureaucratic relations is representation – especially representation in the bureaucracy. The issue of representation is not exclusive to developing countries; within political science research more generally there has been much focus on the extent to which bureaucracies should reflect the interests, views, needs, goals and values of the general public in the policy process (Pitkin, 1967; Keiser *et al.*, 2002). However, the issue of representative bureaucracy is arguably of more consequence in developing countries, where weak political institutions combined with ethnic divisions can hinder development and increase the risk of violent conflict (Stewart, 2000).

Much of the focus on the issue of representative bureaucracy has considered the extent to which ensuring a demographic group is represented in the makeup of a country's bureaucracy fosters a decision-making process that benefits the group through removing discriminatory boundaries (Mosher, 1982). Research on bureaucratic representativeness, both in terms of ethnicity and gender, has generally found that there is little to suggest that greater numerical representative in the bureaucracy impacts policy outcomes (Subramaniam, 1967; Dresang, 1974; Goetz, 1998; Burnet, 2008).

Political and bureaucratic representativeness – both in terms of gender and ethnic representation – is found to have important symbolic value in terms of shaping public perceptions and attitudes. Burnet (2008), for example, finds that the greater representation of women in Rwanda's political system has transformed public perceptions about the role of women in society. Dresang (1974) argues the representation of different ethnic groups in newly independent Zambia was important for avoiding ethnic divisions in Zambian politics.

Politicians in countries divided along ethnic lines may use employment in the bureaucracy as a means of asserting their control – both over the bureaucracy and over politics in the country more generally. In Trinidad and Guyana, for example, ethnic divisions in politics have meant that employment in the public sector is dependent on which ethnic group happened to be in power, which is found to negatively impact public sector performance (Brown, 1999). The consequences of political influence over civil service employment along ethnic lines can have more damaging consequences. Indeed, it is seen as a core component of 'horizontal inequalities' – inequalities between culturally formed groups – and is associated with

more risk of violent conflict, as has been the case in Rwanda and Sri Lanka in the 1990s (Stewart, 2000; Uvin, 1998). Hence, issues of representation can be an underlying factor in producing more intrusive relations between politicians and administrators.

As such, while there has been some debate over whether seeking to ensure a bureaucracy is representative on the basis of ethnicity can undermine the development of a meritocratic and autonomous bureaucracy, ethnic representation in the bureaucracy has been an important part of state-building in newly independent nations (Enloe, 1978). Indeed, the development success of countries such as Botswana and Mauritius is seen in part as being due to developing a 'politically independent state bureaucracy with personnel policies based largely on merit, but with a composition that is reasonably representative of their societies' (Carroll and Carroll, 1997: 470).

#### *Values, interests and motivations*

The relationship between political and bureaucratic elites shapes, and is shaped by, the values, interests and motivations of each set of actor. Detailed analysis of motivations of government elites has been an area of neglect in development research and policy, as the mainstream development community has been 'guided by an almost religious belief in self-interest as an explanation for human behavior' (Tendler, 1997: 5). This emphasis on self-interest has meant that there is relatively little research that directly examines the role of values and how values and interests influence public attitudes and motivations in developing countries.

In contrast, the desire to help society and its citizens (Perry and Wise, 1990) has been a key area of research in the field of public administration (Bozeman and Su, 2015).

Interest in public service motivation has, in fact, been growing over the past decade, in part because ‘researchers have long shown how important unselfish motivational components like loyalty, identification, and good-spirited cooperation are in overcoming collective action problems, such as free-riding, moral hazards, and opportunism’ (Vandenabeele *et al.*, 2014: 780). Yet, while public sector motivation was initially observed among politicians, it was soon argued that this subset of values and attitudes towards the common good was not unique among politicians, nor among public servants. Instead, it was a motivational disposition that could be found in any individual, regarding their country of origin or the working sector (Brewer and Selden, 1998; Wise, 2000).

Arguably, one of the most important questions that future research on governance in development needs to consider is how and why is there an *esprit de corps* among politicians and bureaucrats directed towards promoting development in some countries and what prevents the creation of these shared developmental values and objectives in other countries? It is these shared values and objectives that lie at the heart of the collaborative political-bureaucratic relations in developmental states. The literature on developmental states points to a number of different factors. One factor is the background of political and bureaucratic elites. The shared class background of political and bureaucratic elites facilitated the formation of shared values and objectives in many developmental states. The slide towards intrusive relations in India was, in part, due to the change in the makeup of politicians. While shortly after independence, Indian politicians tended to come from the same elite background as senior civil servants, over time politicians often came to more closely represent poorer, rural constituents, which contributed to growing distrust between politicians and bureaucrats (Turner and Hulme, 1997).

Another background factor emphasized in the literature on developmental states, such as Japan and South Korea, is the informal networks that were created at elite universities and secondary schools, which political and bureaucratic elites attended, which help to promote collaborative relations. (Evans, 1992).<sup>14</sup> A more recent study by Jones *et al.* (2014) demonstrates how the key reform coalitions in Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s emerged from student organizations and study groups at the University of Ghana in the 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast, informal networks based on kin, ethnicity, or region, is seen to have prevented the formation of a development-oriented ethos among politicians and bureaucrats in many countries.<sup>15</sup>

The formation of an *esprit de corps* between political and bureaucratic elites is not exclusively shaped by such background factors. In many cases, it is the result of political action. Political leadership is crucial for avoiding widespread corruption in the bureaucracy; where the political leadership is corrupt it is almost inevitable that the bureaucracy will be afflicted by systematic corruption (Dwivedi *et al.*, 1989; Hyden *et al.*, 2003). The importance of political leadership goes beyond avoiding corruption. Studies on developmental states, such as Singapore, emphasize the way in which political leaders actively sought to promote values based on public service, nation-building, and development in the bureaucracy (Saxena, 2011). This was done in a number of ways, such as setting up civil service education centers and encouraging bureaucrats to participate in civic projects.

Other political and development factors are also important. For example, political continuity in developmental states – either due to the country being autocratic or

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<sup>14</sup> In his influential account of the Japanese developmental state, Johnson (1982) emphasizes the importance of the *gakubatsu*, the ties among classmates from elite universities.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Turnbull's (2002) discussion of the negative impact of personalized ties between political and bureaucratic elites in the Solomon Islands.

because one political party continually won national elections – helped to develop shared values and objectives over a long period of time (Leftwich, 1995). However, this is true of party-based rather than personalistic regimes. In personalistic systems, such as Zimbabwe, continuity has typically led to more collusive and predatory system. Political ideology is another important factor. Tensions can arise between politicians and bureaucrats due to differences in political ideology, as Costello (1996) discusses in the case of Tanzania. In many developmental states, political leaders avoided framing reforms on the basis of left-right political spectrum, and instead emphasized a pragmatic developmental ideology. This is also noted in studies of successful reforms in developing countries (Melo *et al.*, 2012). In many contexts, this economic success reinforced an ‘ideology of developmentalism’ among the political and bureaucratic elites, as Charlton (1991) explains in the Botswana case.

There are also organizational and individual level factors that can shape motivations among politicians and bureaucrats, and the creation of a shared developmental ethos. Public policy studies suggest that a key determinant of bureaucratic motivations is the characteristics of the specific ministry or agency a bureaucrat works for (Dunleavy, 1991). Individual level factors linked to organizational characteristics are also important, including career progression, influence and wage levels, which impact motivations and performance.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The significant academic research on political-administrative relations has tended to focus almost exclusively on wealthy institutionalized democracies. There has been an absence of attention given to how the nature of political-bureaucratic relations in developing countries, and how these might shape the development process. Yet the

way politicians and bureaucrats engage with one another is increasingly recognized as a key area for understanding the politics and governance of reform in developing countries. The lack of attention to this issue has meant that much of our understanding of the politics-bureaucracy relationship in these countries is based on the relationship observed in advanced democracies. This ignores the significant differences between richer and poorer nations in terms of institutional development and governance structures. As a result, development policy has too often taken a ‘best practice’ approach to governance (Andrews, 2012), where donors and other development organizations have sought to address the failure to improve public services and development outcomes by trying to transfer governance institutions from developed nations to developing country contexts (Andrews, 2013; Levy, 2014). The failure of efforts at wholesale governance reform has spurred much of the recent literature on reforms in developing countries and, more generally, has prompted the recent ‘political turn’ in development research and policy (Carothers and de Gramont, 2013; Hudson and Dasandi, 2014).

This paper brings together this work in a broad framework to provide the basis for more systematic research on the politics-bureaucracy interface in development. In doing so, the paper has offered two contributions. First, we have discussed a typology of political-bureaucratic relations. Specifically, we draw on the concepts of *separation* and *autonomy* (Svara, 2006) to analyze the main different types of relations that politicians and bureaucrats can have. According to this, we have outlined four models of political-bureaucratic relations: collaborative, collusive, intrusive, and integrated. We have also analyzed the main characteristics of each model, and provided an overview of how change occurs in these types of relations. Second, it has identified the key factors associated with the political-bureaucratic

interface in a development context. These factors are resources; recruitment and career progression; representativeness; and values, interests and motivations.

We have elaborated different models of political-bureaucratic relations in developing countries. We have not, however, provided a detailed analysis of these models in specific country cases, or examined in any detail the link between specific models of political-administrative relations and development outcomes. As such, there are several key avenues of future research that follow from this paper. One area is a greater focus on comparative analysis, as much of the existing research on the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is country specific. Another important area of future research is how political-bureaucratic relations can change and what the drivers of this change are. This paper offers the basis for such future research, and provides an entry point for scholars and development policymakers to better understanding the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats in developing countries.



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**TABLE 1.** Typology of political-bureaucratic relations

		<b>Autonomy of bureaucrats</b>	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<b>Separation of political and bureaucratic spheres</b>	<i>High</i>	Intrusive (e.g. India, Ghana)	Integrated (e.g. UK, USA)
	<i>Low</i>	Collusive (e.g. Zimbabwe, Mexico)	Collaborative (e.g. Singapore, China)